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Author(s): George Trumbull Ladd

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN KOREA.

*By George Trumbull Ladd, LL.D., Professor in
Yale University.*

If we compare the present economic and social condition of Korea with that of other civilized countries, we may be much impressed with the inefficiency of its Administration and the lamentably low stage of its development. But if, on the other hand, we contrast the present with the period before the Russo-Japanese war, and more especially, with the hundreds of years that came to an end when, in July, 1907, the Japanese Protectorate took control of all Korean affairs, our impressions of the progress already made, can not fail to be distinctly encouraging.

In the first place, the public order, the police protection, and the judicial administration, have been greatly improved. Piracy, brigandage, the numerous bands of armed robbers which have afflicted the people from very old days, have been practically wiped out. Vagrants, tramps, and ex-insurgents, have been given employment in the construction of roads and other public works. In May last, 1600 laborers, of whom 406 were ex-insurgents, were constructing 87 miles of highway between Hainam and Hatōng. Sanitation has been politely, but so vigorously enforced by the police that, when, in the Summer of 1909, the city of Seoul was seized by cholera, the total death-rate for the season was only 900,—a number which was in former times not infrequently exceeded by the devastation of a single day. But, above all, the Koreans themselves, who have from time immemorial regarded resort to the courts as a means of settling their disputes, by a contest where victory was to be won only through bribery or other kinds of corruption, now have come quite generally to believe in the justice and impartiality of the judgments rendered in the newly-established courts of law.

The economic and social value of this training is not easily over-estimated.

The resources of the country are being, as is inevitable, somewhat fitfully and slowly, but on the whole successfully developed; and in such manner as to cultivate the sense of fairness in all the parties interested. Of these resources those benefited by the development of agriculture and afforestation are the most important. The natives who, at first, would have nothing to do with the new seeds, the new trees—fruit trees and others,—are now so thoroughly converted as to make it difficult for the Government to supply the demand. This Spring the applicants for admission to the Industrial Training School at Seoul were 2,500, of which only 55 could be admitted. The product of alluvial gold mining has more than doubled during the past two years. During last year, various mineral products were reported to the amount of *yen* 5,178,594. The total harvest of cotton in the Province of South Chongla last year was valued at *yen* 800,000. From the same province this year, up to the end of June, cotton to the value of *yen* 1,000,000 was imported into Japan: within ten years it is expected to increase the value of this product to *yen* 11,000,000. The foreign trade of Korea for the first three and a half months of this year was *yen* 12,919,000. At last accounts, 14,082 Japanese, using 3233 boats, and 58,550 Koreans, using 12,413 boats, were employed in the fishing industry in Korean waters. It is noteworthy that the smaller number of Japanese, owing to their superior skill, realized a considerably larger gross income than did the Koreans. It is estimated that, when the more than 6,000 miles of coast-line of Korean waters is well occupied, its yield of fish, which even under existing conditions brought some *yen* 7,000,000, can easily be increased more than five-fold. While the common people are much less oppressively taxed than was formerly the case, the amount collected has grown from *yen* 3,160,656 in 1904, to *yen* 7,769,671 in 1909.

In this connection it is worth noting that the savings by Koreans have grown from 10,999 depositors, with savings of *yen* 75,813 on March 1st, 1909, to 19,923 depositors, with

savings of *yen* 126,865, on March 1st, 1910. These figures will all seem insignificant as compared with those to which American eyes are daily accustomed; but they are eloquent with a word of hope to those who know the miserable Korea of the five centuries now past.

The official census, which was finished and reported during the Summer of 1910, gives Korea a present population of 12,959,981 or a very considerable increase over the census of 1907. The uncertainty attaching itself to the earlier work, and the difficulty of arriving at accurate results in a country of this sort, will prevent our knowing just what this percentage of increase has really been. We may be sure, however, that it will by no means warrant the sentimental claim of the assassin of Ito to represent "20,000,000 of suffering fellow countrymen." The latest investigation (July of this year) of the Japanese population in Korea places it at 143,045. It is interesting also to note that the annual increase of the Japanese *remaining* in Korea, has been almost exactly what I predicted that it would be, in my book, "In Korea with Marquis Ito,"—namely, 20,000.

In order to avoid troubles between the natives and the Chinese inhabiting Korea, and consequent friction between China and the Japanese Administration, arrangements have been made for certain "exclusive settlements" in several of the principal cities of the country. Such arrangements, however, do not prevent the Chinese from residing and engaging in trade outside of these exclusive settlements.

Not only is there now no friction between the Japanese Administration and the Missionaries in Korea, but there is a friendly coöperation in their common work of elevating, in the different ways legitimately belonging to each, the people of the hitherto "Hermit Kingdom." The assassins of Prince Ito and of the Korean Premier were, indeed, professed Christians; and many natives still resort to the Christian churches and the missionaries as a possible political help against the Japanese Government, or even as a cover for political crimes. But Dr. Gale summed up the truth when, in a recent address on Korean affairs, at a missionary meeting in Tokyo he said: "By accepting the Japanese Admin-

istration and doing their best to strengthen it, the Koreans might yet become a blessing to themselves, to Japan, to China, and to all the world." It would seem, then, high time for the people of this country to cease believing the misrepresentations which have been so industriously circulated concerning the intentions and the conduct of the *Administration* in Korea. In this connection should be noted the facts, that the Young Men's Christian Association continues with increased vigor a most helpful work of moral and social reform, and of industrial education, in Seoul; and that the Salvation Army has just had "a very picturesque and successful Stone-laying Ceremony for their new Hall," in the same city. The number of schools under the jurisdiction of the Educational Department was reported in August of this year as being 2,237; of which 27 are Industrial and Technical Schools.

A very suggestive example, by way of contrast, of the ancient and time-honored manner of doing the business of the Emperor, whenever the court official got his coveted chance, has recently come to light. When the Japanese-Korean Gas and Electric Company purchased from Messrs. Collbran and Bostwick the property, some time ago, this firm returned *yen* 300,000 of the 750,000 contributed to the enterprise of the old company by the now ex-Emperor. This large sum of money was given to a nephew of His Majesty, who instead of conveying it to its rightful owner, conspired with some other middlemen to put it in their own pockets, and forge the Emperor's seal for the receipt handed over to the American owner. The nephew has been put under arrest: "it is rumored that the case involves some high officials," but the outcome of the trial will probably be somewhat different from that to have been expected under the unchanged economic, social and judicial conditions of the Old Korea.

The grounds for complaint that the Japanese Government had appropriated large tracts of land in Korea, without due compensation to the owners, have now been reduced to a minimum. Of the 18,000,000 *tsubo* (15,000 acres) appropriated under the Convention of 1904, which empowered Japan "to occupy such places in Korea as might seem necessary

from strategical points of view," 6,000,000 *tsubo* have been returned; 3,500,000 *tsubo* more were shown to be State property; and for the rest there has been paid such prices as were shown to be fair—and in many cases more than fair—at the time the appropriation took place.

It should be noted with satisfaction also that the Government has been increasingly active in endeavors to abolish the other chief reproach to its administration—namely, the presence in the country of renegades, camp-followers, adventurers, and other undesirable Japanese. Of these classes it has deported several hundred; and it is more strictly enforcing the regulations designed to protect the Koreans from extortion, intimidation, abuse, usury, and cognate offenses. As a result, "the *mauvais sujet* has ceased to be *en evidence*" (Japan Mail).

It is too early to judge of the justice and the expediency of the recent act of annexation, or to predict what its outcome is most likely to be. But several considerations may at least avail to induce those most violently anti-Japanese in their feelings to a temporary suspense of judgment. Of all the interests involved, so far as the Koreans themselves are concerned, the most important is the securing of the welfare of the common people. It was this interest which bore so heavily upon the great heart of Prince Ito; it was in the behalf of this interest that he offered up his life. But the chief enemies of the common people of Korea are still, as they have been for centuries, the *yang-bans* (or so-called gentlemen) and the bandits, of their own nation. *It is from these classes that the patriot assassins are almost exclusively derived.* Without having full control of all judicial and administrative police affairs, it has been found difficult, or even impossible to reform the economic, social, and educational conditions and institutions of the multitude of the Korean people. This, at least, is the claim which will be made by those Japanese statesmen who are at the same time of the highest character and also approve of the act of annexation. We shall probably not have to wait long to discover whether their claim is just.

Another important fact which is, apparently, not known at all widely in this country, is this: While the common people in the country districts know little, and care little, about the nature of the central Government, if only they can reap the fruits of good government, there is a large and growing number of the hitherto governing classes who welcome the accomplishment of the act of annexation. Indeed, the most numerous and influential of the various political associations, and one that makes as proud, and perhaps sincere boast of its patriotism as do any of them—*Il Chin Hoi*—has now for some two years been importuning and petitioning the Japanese Government to do this very thing! They have been fairly crying out to be made a part of Japan; and this on the avowed ground that it would be better for Korea itself. To be sure, in doing this they have made themselves marked out for assassination by the afore-said class of patriots. But assassination has been the favorite method of settling political disputes in Korea, as bribery and torture have been the regular instruments of government, for no less than five hundred years.

One more important consideration may well be borne in mind. The Japanese and the Koreans are, ethnologically considered, closely allied races. The present wide differences between the two peoples are chiefly due, on the one hand, to the long continuance of the feudal system in Japan, and on the other hand, to the baleful influence of China upon Korea. The case is, therefore, not at all like that of the British in India, or the French in Madagascar, or the Germans in East Africa, or the Americans in the Philippines. On the contrary, one may rather confidently expect the fulfilment of the prediction made to me during my residence in Korea, by one of my countrymen who was well acquainted with affairs there;—namely, that in fifty years no one would know, and only antiquarians would ask, who was originally Japanese, and who Korean.